

An Ideal Muslim Woman: A Study from Islamic and Contemporary Perspectives

*Dr. Muhammad Zulqarnain

Abstract

This article is an attempt to divulge the personality of an exemplary Muslim woman illustrated in Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Qualitative and Abductive research approach is applied for the collection and analysis of data. The systematic review of literature reveals that Quran and *Sunnah* have given the series of characteristics which make an honorable, upright, virtuous, meritorious, excellent, refined, noble, matchless and balanced Muslim woman. An ideal Muslim woman is well aware of her obligations towards Allah and herself, her parents, husband, children, sisters, friends, neighbors, relatives and her society. She fully understands the major dimensions of her role as a daughter, wife and mother. As an ideal daughter, she comprehends her responsibilities towards her parents and deal with them in terms of care, respect, sympathy, obedience and kindness. Being a wife, she with her husband, behaves in an intelligent, venerating, caring, loving and respectful way. She never reveals her secrets and assists him in doing good deeds. She does not waste any opportunity to make her husband happy. As a mother, she utilizes all of her efforts in upbringing the children according to Islamic commandments. She develops good morals and ethics to make them an ideal Muslim. In keeping view the above theme,

* Former Principal, Al-Ghazali School of Excellence, Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi

the article has carefully been divided into three sections. The first will reflect the status and position of woman in Islam; the second will deal with the major dimensions of woman's life with special reference to Quran and *Sunnah*. The third will briefly look into the contemporary hardships being faced by the Muslim woman and method of their treatment. The contemporary prevailing patterns of thought and behaviour regarding status and position of woman will also be critically analyzed in this section by consulting scholarly literature on Islam. Subsequently, in the light of cited work, the research will give some suggestions and recommendations to depict the portrait of an exemplary woman as defined in Quran and *Sunnah*.

Key Words: *Woman, ideal woman, exemplary woman, woman in Islam, status of woman*

Introduction

Islam is the only religion which granted particular status to woman by explaining her social, political, economic and legal rights. It has given the position of dignity and honour to woman.² A number of Quranic verses and traditions of Holy Prophet PBUH deal with the respectful position of woman in society. Unfortunately, present day woman has lost her deferential rank by following the footsteps of Western woman. She feels pride in adoption of Western culture, norms, customs and civilization. Due to lack of knowledge about Islam she is unaware of her reverent status, responsibilities and rights defined by Quran and *Sunnah*. This

² Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, *Woman in Islam* (Islamabad: Islam International Publications, 2008), 1.

ignorant attitude has raised numerous problems in her social and family life. In this connection, this research article aimed at addressing a balanced and an ideal woman in the light of Islam. The researcher has explained the series of characteristics in order to portray the picture of an ideal woman from various dimensions. In this way the article will briefly look into the characteristics of an ideal woman revealed in Quran and Prophetic Sunnah. There are three major dimensions of a woman; daughter, wife and mother. Each of these will be addressed with the reference of Quran and Sunnah in context of present scenario. A light will also be thrown on the rejected example of Western woman who is completely dissatisfied of her life and want to adopt such set of rules that can provide her basic rights and restore her respectful status in the society.

Status and Position of woman in Islam

Woman is an important element of society as it plays an important role in the rise and fall of any society³ as well as human development.⁴ But unfortunately, the respectful status and position of woman had been misinterpreted throughout the history. From ancient ages to modern time, woman had been facing variety of crises regarding existence, status, position and her rights. In most of the societies she had been treating like a prisoner, criminal, or a person of lower class. It is also recorded that in some societies she was even deprived from the right of humanity. Before

³ Dr. Khalid Alvi, *Islam kā Muāshartī Nizām* (, Lahore: Al-Faisal Nāshirān 2005), 461

⁴ Dr. M. H. Al Khayat, *Woman in Islam and her role in human development* (Cairo: World Health Organization, 2003), 5.

we discuss the status of woman in Islam, we have a little glance on woman status in different societies.

Āmina Abdullah writes about the conditions of woman in Arabian society that by consulting the Qurānic, social and legal laws regarding women, one can find the former absence of any legal status for women and their vulnerable social situation.⁵ Arabs used to consider the birth of a daughter as a misfortune as it is mentioned in the Noble Quran;

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنْثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ

And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female,

his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief.⁶

Most of the ignorant people used to bury their daughters alive after the birth. They will be asked on the Day of Judgment about their bad deed. It is stated in the Quran;

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ

And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked. For what sin she was killed?

Abdul Rehman writes that the condition of Arab was not much different from today's Europe. Women were used as a source of fulfilling the wishes of lower self and the entire social system was destroyed due to illicit relations.⁷

⁵ Āmina Abdullah, *Islam and Modernity* (London: University of London, MA Thesis, 1992), 12.

⁶ Al Quran, 16:58

⁷ Abdul Rehman Khān, 'Aurat Insāniyat kay Āyeney mein (Lahore: Sanāullah Khān, 1957), 95.

In ancient times, Greek was considered most civilized state with the reference of knowledge and civilization. The development of knowledge is referred to the Greek philosophers due to their enormous contribution in social, political, ethical, and economic sciences. But when we look upon the status of woman in Greek we find that the position of woman was not much different from the ignorant Arab. The great philosopher Socrates writes that the woman is nothing but wickedness and brawl.⁸ According to Abdul Samad Sārim the Greek woman had no right and free will that she could do anything with her own wish.⁹

Roman Empire was known as second civilized nation in the world after Greek. But woman was treated like a prisoner in Roman Empire.¹⁰ Maulānā Abul Kalām Āzād writes that roman had banned eating meat, laughing and talking on their women.¹¹ Women were deprived from all of their social, legal and economic rights.

When Islam arrived in the Arab, it changed the status of women by giving her all types of rights with dignity and honor. First of all the Holy Quran gave the right of protection to the woman and later social, legal and economic rights. Some of the verses of Holy Quran deal with the rights of woman are given below;

Before Islam, woman was deprived from the right of property. Islam diminished this practice and gave women right to property. The Quran stated;

⁸ Sārim Abdul Samad, *Maqālāt-e-Sārim* (Lohore: Hijāzī Press, n.d), 85.

⁹ Alvī, *Islām kā Muāshartī Nizām*, 462.

¹⁰ S.M, Naz, *Islam mein Aurat kī Qiādat* (Lahore: Maktaba Āaliyah, 1994), 50

¹¹ Tariq Academy, *Muslmān Aurat* (Faisalabad: Tariq Academy 2002), 120.

وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا
مَّفْرُوضًا

And for women is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, be it little or much - an obligatory share.¹²

The Noble Quran amazingly enlists the various rights of woman in the following verse.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرِهًا وَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ لِيَذْهَبُوا
بِبَعْضِ مَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبِينَةٍ وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا

O you who have believed, it is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion. And do not make difficulties for them in order to take [back] part of what you gave them unless they commit a clear immorality. And live with them in kindness. For if you dislike them - perhaps you dislike a thing and Allah makes therein much good.¹³

Allah Almighty gave special instructions to behave kindly and politely with the parents. Quran has ordained the believers to do the act of benevolence. This commandment becomes more important in case of mother as it is mentioned in the Quran;

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنْ
اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ

And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon

¹² Al Quran, 4:7

¹³ Al Quran, 4:19

weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to

Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination.¹⁴

Quranic commandments show that men and women are equal from creational¹⁵ and spiritual point of view and men have no superiority upon women in this regard. Both of them will be equal rewarded according to their deeds. Quran states this concept in the following words;

أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّمَّنْ ذَكَرْتُ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ

Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female.¹⁶

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا

And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer - those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed.¹⁷

Three major dimensions of an ideal woman from Islamic Perspective

There are three major dimensions of an ideal woman illustrated in diagram below;

¹⁴ Al Quran, 31:14

¹⁵ Dr M. H. Al Khayat, Woman in Islam and her role in human development, pg. 8

¹⁶ Al Quran, 3:195

¹⁷ Al Quran, 4:124

Visual Presentation of Major Dimensions of Woman

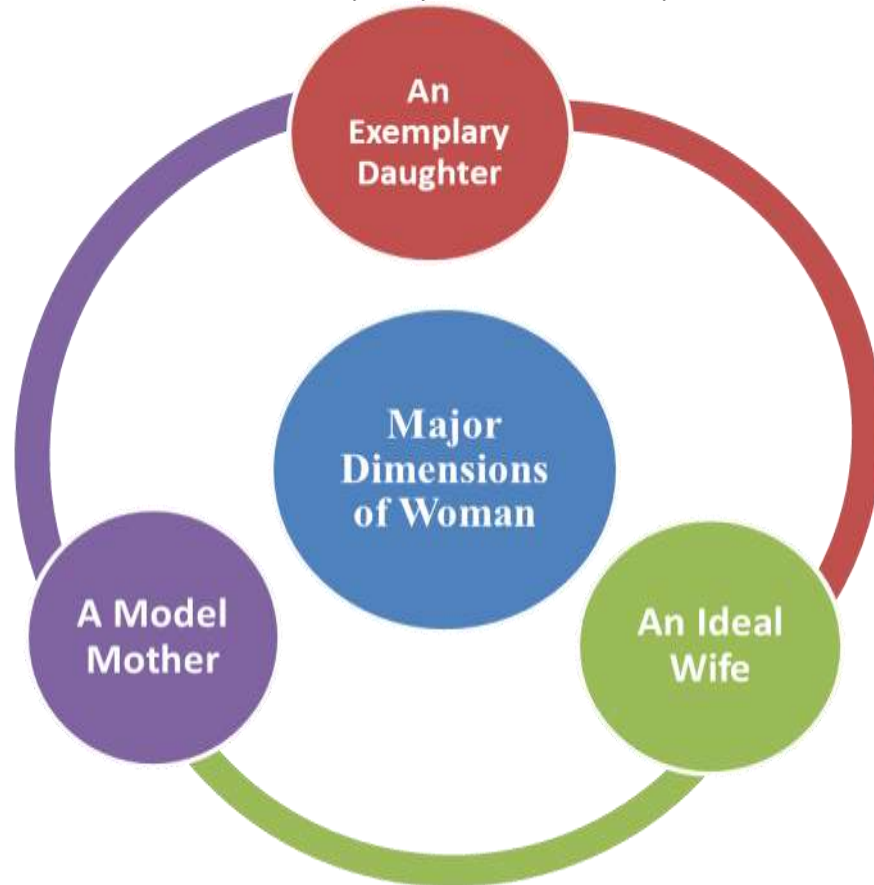


Diagram: 1

Characteristics of an Exemplary Daughter

The Muslim daughter is kind and softhearted towards her parents in all conditions. She utilizes best of her efforts in order to make them happy and never lose any opportunity to win their pleasure. She greets them with smile, visit time to time and say words of sympathy. She cares for them during their lives and prays to Allah Almighty after their death. She approaches her parents in gentle, sensitive, kind and respectful manner. She does not treat them harshly and try to convince them with solid

arguments and proofs. She even behaves well with her non-Muslim parents despite of knowing that shirk is the worst sin. Following are the some of the characteristics of an Ideal daughter revealed in Quran and Sunnah;

- **Kind and Respectful Attitude**

One of the distinguished qualities of an ideal Muslim daughter is her respectful and kind behavior with her parents. Text of Holy Quran and Sunnah encourage treating the parents with respect and kindness.

وَاحْفَظْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small.¹⁸

- **Recognition of Duties**

Muslim daughter knows her duties towards her parents and tries her best to fulfill them enthusiastically. Pleasing one's parents is declared the best deed after having faith in Allah Almighty.

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], "uff," and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word.¹⁹

وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا

¹⁸ Al Quran, 17:24

¹⁹ Al Quran, 17:23

"Worship Allah and associate nothing with him, and to parents do good".²⁰

This respectful behavior remains an important part throughout of her life even in critical circumstances and over burden conditions.

- **Behavior with Non-Muslim Parents**

The prophet PBUH ordained to behave kindly with the Non-Muslim parents as well. It becomes evident from the Hadith of Asma' bint Abi Bakr, whose mother was non-Muslim and came her to ask help. Hadrat Asma asked Holy Prophet PBUH whether she should do the help or not? The Prophet Muhammad PBUH replied "keep in touch with your mother and help her."²¹

The hadith clearly reveals that Islam did not neglect even the rights of non-Muslim parents and gave them equal status to the Muslim parents in fulfilling of their rights.

- **Reluctant to disobey Parents**

Muslim woman is afraid of committing sin of disobedience towards her parents. She knows well the enormity of this major sin. Islam has drawn clear line between disobedience of parents and associating partner with Allah. Disobedience to one's parents is counted as major sin in Islam but associating partner with Allah Almighty is worst of sins which is unforgiveable. It came in Hadith that the prophet Muhammad PBUH told

²⁰ Al Quran, 4:36

²¹ Bukhārī and Muslim, See *Sharh al-Sunnah*, 13/13, Kitāb al-birr wa'l-silah, bab silat al-walid al-mushrik.

his companions that Associating partners with Allah and disobeying one's parents is the greatest sin."²²

First Mother, then her father

Islam has given particular emphasize on parental rights. Some text deals with the mother and father separately while some other joins them. The traditions of Holy Prophet PBUH reveal that mother's rights are given special importance to be fulfilled as it is mentioned in Hadith; once a man asked Holy Prophet PBUH about the person who deserved most of his company. The Holy Prophet PBUHA three times replied on his question that your mother, then your mother, then your mother then your father.²³

An Ideal Wife from Islamic Perspective

According to *sahī* ḥadīth Marriage is the Sunnah of Holy Prophet PBUH and whoever does not marry is not from us. Marriage is considered a blessed contract in Islam in which husband and wife start their journey on account of harmony, tolerance, mutual understanding, cooperation and sprit of love. The Noble Quran described the basis of this relationship in the following words;

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ
مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً

²² Bukhārī and Muslim, See *Sharh al-Sunnah*, 13/15, Kitāb al-birr wa'l-silah, bab tahrīm al- 'uquq.

²³ Bukhaāī and Muslim, See *Sharh al-Sunnah*, 13/4, Kitāb al-birr wa'l-silah, bab birr alwālidayn.

And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy.²⁴

The core purpose of marriage is the reproduction of humanity and to establish the truly Islamic society. The strongest element of an Islamic society is the Muslim family which is only possible when its members are helping, cooperative, and productive. In this connection, the righteous and virtuous wife play her role just like a pillar. She is taken the greatest pleasures in one's life as the Holy Prophet PBUH is reported to have said; "This world is just temporary conveniences, and the best comfort in this world is a righteous woman."²⁵ The Holy Prophet PBUH has explained the characteristics due to which woman is married. He said a woman is married due to wealth, noble descent, beauty and religion. You should choose the religious lady.

Here we discuss below the major qualities of a Muslim wife revealed in Quran and tradition of Holy Prophet PBUH;

- **Choosing Good Husband**

The choice of the right partner is very important for both the man and woman. An intelligent woman does not choose her partner just because of being handsome, rich or good social position. If the man is weak religiously, the first three characteristics cannot ensure the happiness in

²⁴ Al Quran, 30:21

²⁵ Imam Muslim, Sahih Muslim 10/56, Kitāb al-rida', bāb istihbab nikāh al-bikr.

life. Therefore woman should prefer the religious attitude and character of men while choosing the husband.²⁶

Islam has given the right of choosing husband to the woman. Her parents are not allowed to force her to marry against her will. Despite the right of choosing husband, Muslim woman does not reject the parents' advice because they think best for her future. In this connection, Imam Bukhārī has quoted the saying of Holy Prophet PBUH of al-Khansa' bint Khidam as she was married to the nephew of his father contrary to her choice. She did not like her and complained to Holy Prophet PBUH. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH asked her to accept but when she denied the Prophet Muhammad PBUH declared the marriage invalid by saying her that go and marry wherever you want.²⁷

The above hadith clears that the Prophet PBUH first, asked to obey her father as the father wants the best for her daughter. But when he realized that she is not agreed due to the enforcement of her father, he permitted her to marry where she wanted. This saying of Holy Prophet PBUH explains that Islam does not impose any burden on woman in case of marriage.

- **Understanding the Husband**

Muslim wife is expected to know about the mood, likes, dislikes and habits of the husband to live comfortable life. She also needs to be aware

²⁶ B. Aisha Lemu, The ideal Muslim wife (Niger state: Islamic Education trust, 2007), 7.

²⁷ Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, 9/194, Kitāb al-nikāh, bab ikrāh al-bint 'ala al-zawāj; Ibn Mājah, 1/602, Kitāb al-nikāh, bāb man zawwaja ibnatahu wa hiya kārihah; *al-Mabsūt* 5/2.

his psychology and responds him accordingly. This exercise brings pleasure and joy in the life and removes the hurdles and hardships from home.

- **Obedience**

Muslim woman is very respectful and obedient to her husband. She is eager to make her husband happy. She counts the blessings of Allah Almighty, remains thankful to her husband and does not complain about housework, poverty and hardships of life. The Prophet described the characteristics of a good wife that virtuous wife is that; when the husband looks at her he pleases, when he asks her to do anything she obeys, and in his absence she is loyal to him". If the husband asks her to do something and she disagrees, she can give her advice and share her opinion; however if the husband is not convinced, it's better if she obeys her husband unless it is something which will make her disobey Allah Almighty.

- **The home, Guests and Spending**

Muslim woman usually takes indoor responsibilities and manage her home well. She cleans and maintains it by taking care of each and every thing. She does not invite guests without consulting her husband. The Prophet PBUH declared unlawful for women to fast if her husband does permit, and she is not authorized to enter his house with permission of her husband. Likewise wife cannot spend the wealth of her husband without his permission.

- **Keeping secrets**

The Muslim woman keeps the secrets of her husband and does not reveal them to anyone. She does not get involved in vulgar, cheap, shameless and time wasting activities. She is well aware of the saying of Holy

Prophet PBUH that the husband and wife who enjoy the intimacy company of each other and then disclose to someone would be the worst people on the Judgment day before Allah.

The teachings of Quran and Sunnah strongly reject to disclose the secrets of husband and wife and declare it a major sin. It is therefore a Muslim wife should fear from Allah Almighty and should refrain from this shameful activity.

- **Pray to Allah SWT**

It is mentioned in the Holy Quran that the righteous people pray to Allah;

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا
لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا

And those who say, "Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes and make us an example for the righteous."²⁸

The righteous wife assists and cooperates with her husband by praying to Allah Almighty. Along with these major characteristics, the Muslim woman takes care of her husband, family, home and indoor activities as well.

A Model Mother in Islamic Perspective

Children are the blessing of Allah Almighty as they are source of pleasure and happiness.

They are future source for the father and hope for the mother as they are representatives of the family. Due to such significance, the upbringing of children is an important task for the parents. If their proper nurturing is neglected, they will become harmful for the family as well as for the society. Mother plays an important role in upbringing of children as she is

²⁸ Al Quran, 25:74

the first teacher of the children. Here we discuss the role of mother in upbringing of children from Islamic perspective.

- **Understanding the Responsibilities**

It is an established fact that children pass their most of time with mother and tend to be closer to their mother as compare to father. It is therefore, the responsibility of mother becomes double in upbringing and appropriate training of children. The mother is equally responsible for intellectual, emotional, spiritual, religious and physical development of the children. It is mentioned in the Holy Quran;

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا

O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire.²⁹

It comes into *sahi* hadith that the Prophet Muhammad PBUH said "Each of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock." ³⁰

Islam wants to establish such society in which every person is responsible and accountable. Parents in general, while mothers in particular are responsible for the sound education and moral training of their children.

- **Using Best Method of Upbringing**

Presently, the subject of children psychology has gained very much importance in the field of education. The intelligent mother tries to understand the psychology, nature, and capabilities of her children and treats them in a way that they can learn better. She uses the best possible method to train her children. Children share their thoughts, emotions,

²⁹ Al Quran, Quran 66:6

³⁰ Bukhārī and Muslim, See *Sharh al-Sunnah*, 10/61, Kitab al-imarah wa'l-qada', bāb al-ra'i mas'ul 'an ri'atihi.

problems and wishes with their mother as they think her the best shelter. In response, an ideal mother refines their thought, emotions, character and attitude.

- **Demonstrating Love and Affection**

The Muslim mother is kind, loving, caring, and affectionate to her children. Such caring attitude develops trust, confidence, hope and sense of ambition. This loving behavior is in the obedience of Holy Prophet PBUH as it comes into hadith that "He is not one of us who does not show compassion to our little ones and recognize the rights of our elders."³¹

Once Holy Prophet PBUH kissed al-Hasan in front of a man. He said I have ten children but never kissed them. The messenger of Allah said who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.³²

Likewise the Prophet Muhammad PBUH praised the Qurayshī women due to their love for their children and utmost care for husbands' wealth.³³

The poet Hittan Ibn al- Mu'alla praised the children in beautiful words: "Our children are our hearts, walking among us on the face of the earth, if even a little breeze touches them, we cannot sleep for worrying about them."³⁴

- **Treating Sons and Daughter Equally**

³¹ Ahmad, *Musnad*, 2/185, al-Hākim, *Mustadrak*, 1/62, Kitāb al-īmān

³² Bukhārī and Muslim, *Sharh al-Sunnah*, 13/34, Kitāb al-birr wa'l-silah, bāb rahmah al-walad wa taqbilihi.

³³ Fath al-Bārī, 6/472, Kitāb Hadīth al-Anbiyā', bāb qawlihi ta'ala, 45-48 min 'Āl Imrān.

³⁴ Abu Tammām, al-Hamasah, 1/167.

Islam is a religion of equality. Parents are advised to treat all children equally. The Muslim mother is very careful in this regard because she knows the bad consequences of treating the children with discrimination. Islam also strictly forbids behaving in such way as it leaves negative impact on the personality of the children. The ignored children grow up with a lot of complexes and mental disorders. On the contrary, those children who are equally treated are free from jealousy, hatred and other developmental disorders. The Holy Prophet PBUH Said 'Fear Allah and treat all of your children equally'.

By keeping in view the teachings of Islam, the Muslim woman fears Allah Almighty and treats all of her children equally. She makes no discrimination between sons and daughters and considers them the gifts of Allah as Allah referred the sons and daughter towards his will.

يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ إِنَّا ثَوَابُهُمْ لَمِنْ يَشَاءُ الذُّكُورَ

He gives to whom He wills female [children], and He gives to whom He wills males.³⁵

Before Islam, Arab felt shame on the birth of daughters and were proud of sons. Islam condemned this wrong concept and raised the importance of woman by giving special commandments. I came into Hadith that one who up brings his three daughters properly, Allah will enter him in Paradise. A man asked if one has two daughters, the Prophet PBUH replied even he has two, another man asked if he has only one, The Prophet of mercy said even he has only one.³⁶

³⁵ Al Quran, 42:49

³⁶ Ahmad, *Musnad*, 2/335 and al-Hākim, *Mustadrak*, 4/176, Kitāb al-birr wa'l-silah.

The Holy Prophet PBUH strictly forbade preferring the son on daughter. It is reported in hadith that the Prophet PBUH said that if anyone blessed with a daughter, neither he buried her alive, nor humiliate and did not prefer son upon her, Allah will enter him heaven.³⁷

The Holy Prophet PBUH explained the status of daughter by saying that whoever from my Ummah will have three daughters/sisters, support them till they grow, he will be in paradise with me like this-held his two fingers i.e. middle and index finger-³⁸

- **She does not pray against her children**

The Muslim Mother never pray against her children as it is forbidden by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. It comes in hadith that "Do not pray against yourselves, or against your children, or against your wealth, in case you say such words at a time when Allah will answer your prayer."³⁹

- **Developing good morals and behaviour**

The Muslim mother utilizes best of her energy in inculcation good morals and habits into the children. She always keeps an eagle eye upon them. She knows well what they are reading, writing, watching and doing. She observes their activities and refrain them from bad deeds. She develops the feeling of love, sympathy, respect, truthfulness, cooperation, dignity and promotion of good. She is the first teacher and school of her children.

³⁷ Al-Hākim, al-Mustadrak 4/177, Kitāb al-birr wa'l-silah.

³⁸ Al-Tabarānī, *al-Awsat*. See *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, 8/157.

³⁹ Sahīh Muslim, 18/139, Kitāb al-zuhd, bāb Ḥadīth Jābir al-tawil.

One of the poets has rightly said that the mother is just like a school and she is the foremost and best among all teachers.⁴⁰

Muslim Woman and Contemporary Challenges: Rejected Example of Western Woman

Unfortunately, Muslim communities are badly affected by the Western influence in all aspects of life. Muslim woman are not saved from the poison of Western ideologies. The freedom movement, woman rights, and other similar slogans have destroyed the respectful status of woman and misused her in the society. Muslim woman feels pride by following the footsteps of Western woman in dressing, habits, family and social life. She is unaware of the responsibilities which Islam has imposed on her. Western intellectuals have seen the consequences of the woman freedom and are scared of the destruction of their society. The divorce rate is increasing terribly in West due to unsuccessful family relationship. The illicit relationship between man and woman is giving birth numerous problems in society which leaves negative impact on children, family, social personal, and economic life. Western woman is seeking for the shelter, where she could live respectfully and her rights could be fulfilled. It is therefore Islam attracted the intellectual and public class due to its golden family institution which builds a powerful relationship between man and woman and make them responsible towards each other. The golden rules of Islam caused in spreading Islam in the West rapidly and a big number of women are accepting Islam and are feeling protection after coming under the shed of Islam.

⁴⁰ Hāfiz Ibrāhīm, *Diwān Hāfiz Ibrāhīm* (Egypt: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, n.d), 282.

Research Methodology

According to the nature of subject, qualitative research method is used in this descriptive research. The major focus was remained on the primary sources; Quran and Sunnah to explore the characteristics of an ideal woman. However secondary sources were also consulted according to the current trend of research. The data was also collected from library and internet after careful assurance. The scholarly literature including the articles and commentaries of jurists added to the weight of the article and endorsed the finding of the paper.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The aim of this descriptive research was to explore the characteristics of an ideal woman in the light of Quran and Sunnah. The review of literature concluded that Quran and *Sunnah* have discussed the three major dimensions of a woman; daughter, wife and mother. There are complete instructions for all these three categories in Quran and traditions of Holy Prophet PBUH. Islam wants to see the Muslim woman an honorable, upright, virtuous, meritorious, excellent, refined, noble, matchless and balanced personality. According to Quran and Sunnah an ideal woman knows her responsibilities towards herself, her parents, husband, children, sisters, friends, neighbors, relatives and her society. An exemplary daughter deals her parents with kindness, obedience, respect, and sympathy. An obedient wife obeys solemnly her husband, remains eager to please him and shows an attitude of love and respect. Likewise the Muslim mother sacrifices wealth, health, and energy to make her children peaceful and obedient. She takes utmost care in their proper upbringing and nurturing and makes them an ideal Muslim.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The research in the light of above findings suggests that educationist and competent authorities should pay special attention to produce the ideal Muslim women into the society. It is only possible when the course contents will have special material related to the training of woman from various dimensions. Examples of wives of Holy Prophet PBUH and other historical woman could be added to provoke the interest of Muslim women. Particular chapters should be included which explain the characteristics of ideal Muslim daughter, wife and mother. Moreover a living environment is needed in the educational institutions where women should be given an opportunity to practice the golden teachings of Islam so that they can live their lives according to Islam. Because Muslim woman is not merely responsible for her but equally responsible to play her role in society to spread Islam as the great leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah said that it is necessary for a Muslim woman to work for spreading the Islamic ideas.⁴¹ It is observed that Muslim women seem impressed from the Western style of living which is entirely anti Islam. Therefore it is responsibility of Muslim scholars to expose the hollowness of Western ideologies on both; theoretical and practical grounds.

41 Ghazāla Butt, Jinnah's concept of an ideal Muslim women, *Pakistan Journal of Islamic Research* Vol 8 (2011) :69-76.